

Christianity's Shadow Founder: Marcion, Anti-Judaism, and the Birth of Liberal Protestantism

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Samuel Loncar on Marcion

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As soon as it is left as a matter of religious taste I have nothing against it; but we owe a dreadful amount of evil in our theology to the dogmatic use of the Old Testament. And if Marcion had been properly understood and not hereticized, our doctrine of God would have remained far purer. I consider this necessary to say with the utmost strength, and for me it is a matter of conscience [...]. – Friedrich Schleiermacher (1830)

Why Marcion Matters

Imagine a Christianity without Judaism: A bible with no Israel, no Torah, no law and prophets, and finally a Jesus without a history, revealing a god separate from and unknown to the world prior to Jesus' appearance in history. In such an imagined act, one comes close to imagining the under-studied truth of modern Christian theology: that such a form of Christianity, a Christianity without Judaism, lies at the foundation of Protestant liberalism. This form of Christianity is not new to the modern world, but is associated with the "arch-heretic" of early Christianity, Marcion of Sinope.

In the second century CE, Marcion taught that Jesus was the revelation of an unknown god, a totally hidden divinity that had nothing to do with creation, which was the work of the god of the Jewish people, who were still awaiting their Messiah. The Jewish god was a god of justice and wrath, while the god of Jesus was a god of pure grace, who had come to deliver humanity – though not the Jewish leaders – from the world. Christianity thus had nothing to do with Judaism, and, as a result, Marcion eliminated the Jewish scriptures from the Christian Bible, and excluded all parts of what would become the New Testament that seemed too Jewish. In the standard narratives of church history, Marcion thereby inaugurated the formalization of the orthodox canon of Scriptures, making him one of the most important "heretics" in Christian history.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Marcion enjoyed a great revival and his thought became associated with the leading thinkers in German theology. By the early twentieth century Marcionism was so important in German theology that Franz Rosenzweig claimed that the form of Christianity to which he had been so attracted was that of Marcionism. When Karl Barth, the most influential figure of twentieth-century theology, published his groundbreaking commentary on Romans, *Der Römerbrief* (1919/1922), a canny early reader, Adolf Jülicher, compared his theology to that of Marcion, and Barth himself later acknowledged the similarities. Moreover, every major liberal historical theologian, from Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860) and Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), to Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), had a deep interest in Marcion. And during the Third Reich, the Marcionist view of Scripture – a totally de-Judaized canon – became the center of a movement to eliminate Jewish influence on the German church and insist that Jesus was not Jewish, but Aryan.

Yet the significance of Marcionism has been studied only piecemeal and has not risen to the disciplinary consciousness of any of the fields it affects, such as Judaic studies, intellectual history, or Christian theology and the study of anti-Judaism, nor has there been a systematic consideration of whether the current of Marcionism in modern German theology contributed to the theological anti-Judaism and antisemitism that came to expression in National Socialism.

Although there is some awareness of this interest in Marcionism spread throughout various scholarly fields, there is no dedicated scholarly account of the origins of this interest, its significance for Protestant Liberalism, and, crucially, its relationship to anti-Judaism. For Marcion's form of Christianity is the most explicitly anti-Judaic version of Christian ever envisioned, and thus the Marcionist character of modern German theology would seem relevant to scholars concerned about anti-Judaism as well as Christian-Jewish relations. Yet the Marcionist pattern in modern thought has been only occasionally noted in the excellent work on these subjects, such that in the most recent and thorough survey of anti-Judaism, David Nirenberg's *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, Marcion's role in modern theology is not mentioned, and in Susannah Heschel's groundbreaking work on Christianity and the Bible under National Socialism, *The Aryan Jesus*, Marcion is mentioned but once. Likewise, Alon Confino's recent work, *A World Without Jews*, which opens by asking how the Nazis came to burn the Hebrew Bible, does not mention Marcion. A similarly surprising fact is that while the importance of theological anti-Judaism may be well known to a small group of specialized scholars, it remains an area which is ironically understudied by precisely the scholars who are specialists in the religious tradition which has played such a pivotal, and bloody, role in the persecution of the Jews: scholars of Christian theology.

Since Christianity has supplied so much of the material for and justifications of prejudice against Judaism as a religion and the Jews as a people, and since the great theorists of Christianity are its theologians and philosophers, anti-Judaism represents an organic intersection of all these areas and requires collaborative work from specialists in each of the relevant areas. Yet to date, the most consequential recent work on the subject has been written by professional historians, particularly intellectual historians, who are increasingly taking up subjects directly relevant to theologians and philosophers, but shedding new light on them. This trend may stem in part from the fact that modern intellectual history stands external to any specific religion or philosophical framework, frameworks which traditionally have narrated their own histories with a confessional bias. And it is this lack of critical attention to Christian theology's own tradition of anti-Judaism, I would suggest, that has contributed to the significant gap in intellectual history, Judaic studies, and the history of theology and philosophy that this article aims to address.

This interdisciplinary lacuna is the failure of scholars of the Christian tradition to draw a crucial connection that emerges from their own field concerning the theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). Schleiermacher is the architect and cornerstone of modern theology, the founding theologian of Liberal Protestantism, and thus the most important and influential theologian for the shape of Christianity among cultural elites and academics.

When viewed not from the contemporary theologian's ghetto but from a broader historical perspective, one that includes the consequences of theological ideas in practice, arguably the single most important element in Friedrich Schleiermacher's theology has been missed or ignored, with few scholars even noting it and even fewer recognizing its broader significance. Schleiermacher's masterpiece, *Der Christliche Glaube*, or *The Christian Faith*, is rightly regarded as

one of the great works in Christian theology and the founding work of modern theology. Attention has been lavished upon countless details of his theology but no systematic analysis has been given to the simple fact that Schleiermacher is the first theologian who is both recognized as a great Christian theologian and who accepts the crucial dogmatic position enunciated by Marcion: the rejection of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture and the explicit elimination of Judaism as a constitutive part of Christianity. The fact that this position has received practically no serious, systematic treatment in its connection to Marcion is remarkable. For Schleiermacher's Marcionism must be a crucial part of any answer to the question, why has Marcion been of such interest, even if largely subterranean, in modern theology?

The answer, in part, is because the founder of modern theology was a Marcionist. The purpose of this article is to manifest this fact such that its historical and theological significance becomes clear, that is, to begin to address the lacuna above by making Schleiermacher's Marcionism a topic of systematic importance in the interpretation of Schleiermacher and liberal theology. Moreover, unless we ask *why* Marcionism as a theological position is important to Schleiermacher, we will not offer insight into why, beyond a genetic connection to Schleiermacher, subsequent theologians were either interested or shared deep affinities with Marcion.

Marcionism is far from an incidental element of Schleiermacher's thought, as the neglect of the subject could lead one to think; it is in fact the theological legitimization of what increasingly becomes the profoundly anti-Judaic norm of Protestant Liberalism. This article shows how in key respects Schleiermacher is Marcion's heir, and consequently builds into the foundations of Protestant Liberalism, and thus distinctively modern theology, the elimination of Judaism from Christianity. This is a very large story which has not yet been told in its fullness, and it is one whose full contours must eventually lead to the stories told by Confino and Susannah Heschel, among others, and to questions about the relationship between twentieth-century German theology and the receptiveness of the German people, including the religious elites, to National Socialism and its programmatic and genocidal antisemitism. Crucially, it is also a philosophical story in which Kant (and Fichte) plays a central role.

My focus here, however, will be limited to providing a foundational sketch of Schleiermacher's thought in relation to Marcion, and then in turn in relation to the rise of Protestant Liberalism in Germany, with the broader purpose of sketching a crucial and missing chapter in the history of nineteenth-century religion, anti-Judaism, and the process whereby German theologians eliminated Judaism from their conception of Christianity. It must be stressed that the current argument can only point to further work that must be done if the full story of German theology's relationship to later anti-Judaism and antisemitism is to be told, and it seeks neither to deal with the question of antisemitism in Schleiermacher's biography, nor to suggest that this theology is directly linked to the Holocaust.

Yet if the founder of modern theology constructs a Christianity without Judaism, if he returns in a modern key to the ancient Marcion, then outlining the historical significance of Schleiermacher's Marcionism becomes essential to establishing its foundational role in the construction of Protestant Liberalism.

I will make this argument by dealing briefly with Marcion as a theological figure and by arguing for a more general concept of Marcionism as a heuristic tool. I then discuss Schleiermacher's context and view of Scripture, specifically the canon, and relate it to his broader theological commitments, but I begin this treatment by placing Schleiermacher in the broader intellectual context of his time. In the conclusion I provide a brief *Nachleben* of Schleiermacher's Marcionism in Protestant biblical scholarship and historical theology, through a glance at the thought of Ferdinand Christian Baur, Adolf von Harnack, and the recent controversy surrounding the contemporary German theologian Notger Slenzcka.

Reconstructing Marcion

The details of Marcion's life and thought remain contested, but the broad contours of his thought remain clear, and the focus of this article is with the Marcion of the theological tradition, rather than the ever-contested Marcion of critical history. Adolf von Harnack wrote the classic scholarly work on Marcion, but recently Judith Lieu has written a major overview of Marcion's life and thought that is indispensable for those wishing to understand the complexities of the historical Marcion. As Harnack is also an analytical object of this article, using him as a source can be problematic. His work on Marcion, however, is indispensable, and its theological acuity is unrivalled, so while I here draw on it and Lieu as my major sources for Marcion's thought, I will turn later to consider Harnack's approach to Marcion in its historical context. Harnack's Marcion book, like any scholarly work, can be a primary or secondary source depending on the frame of investigation. The simultaneous use and historicization of a source may induce the distinctive vertigo of historical consciousness, but it also prevents the scholar from avoiding the fact that, as we depend on sources, so we construct them.

Who Was Marcion, and What Did He Teach?

Marcion of Sinope was born sometime near the end of the first century and was a contemporary of Justin Martyr. His father was the bishop of Sinope, and it is possible that Marcion's family was Jewish in background. Jaroslav Pelikan, reflecting the perspective of a Christian historian of doctrine, observed that "[i]t is evident that certain forms of Judaism were the origin of the earliest forms of Christian heresy. . . . Nevertheless, the most important early heresies were not Jewish, but anti-Jewish in their inspiration." Marcionism can justly be regarded as the

most extreme form of anti-Jewish Christianity in the history of the early church. Harnack, who was sympathetic to Marcion, argues that “his Christianity is built upon a resentment towards Judaism and its religion.”

Characteristic of Marcion's thought was a total rejection of allegory and a rigorous insistence on the literal sense of Scripture, a view that led him to regard the Old Testament as exclusively Jewish Scripture with no Christian status. He thus entirely rejected the Old Testament and edited the New Testament down to versions of Luke's Gospel and ten of Paul's epistles (all save the pastoral epistles). Marcion eliminated “Judaizing” elements of the New Testament and regarded Paul as the sole genuine apostle. But of whom, if not the God of Israel? Jesus, and thus later Paul, reveal the “alien God,” a God unknown to anyone prior to his revelation in Jesus Christ, a God of pure love and goodness who has nothing to do with creation.

Marcion drew the logical conclusion of his radical “Paulinism,” viz. he claimed that the God of the Old Testament was the Jewish, not Christian, God and that he was the source of evil in the world, or, more precisely, he was the source of evil as the source of the world, for the world itself was evil and had no part in redemption. For Marcion, like the Gnostics, “the world had lost its right to be, so that the palpable fact of its existence evoked every conceivable form of hostile judgment and condemnation,” and thus the redeeming God “enters into the world as an *outsider* and an *alien Lord*.” The gospel of the Alien Lord is thus radically new, in no way anticipated or foreseen.

The God of the Old Testament, as the God of wrath, “justice,” and law, was the enemy of Jesus Christ, who comes to save humanity *from the world* and from the Jewish God who had made it. While there is debate as to Marcion's consistency in charactering the Old Testament God as both just and evil, it is clear that ultimately the God of this world comes in for final judgment, as does his people. For although Marcion's thought tends towards a universalism, he interprets the descent into hell as saving all those prior to his coming *except the Jewish leaders*. Thus, in spite of the alien God being the God of love, “the Jews, as the chosen people of the creator of the world, are the enemies of Christ *par excellence*, and their patriarchs, prophets, and leaders cannot be redeemed.”

Redemption is the center of Marcion's gospel, and ultimately redemption is the gracious manifestation of the alien God himself in Jesus Christ. Indeed, “the gospel is Jesus Christ.” We are redeemed from the law above all, and thus from this world and its God. Tertullian said, “The separation of the law and gospel is the characteristic and foundational work of Marcion.” Redemption is thus the self-manifestation of God in and as Christ, to which believers respond in faith, and by which they are saved from the law and promised deliverance from the world.

Because of God's alien nature, Harnack argues that Marcion "*developed with utmost consistency the religion of inwardness*." He thus radically separated *soteriology* from *cosmology* as a result of his emphasis on creating a "biblical theology solely from the sacred documents."

We can summarize Marcion's commitments into four key elements, which I will organize around Jesus in accordance with Marcion's theology, for the first general element of Marcion's thought is radical Christocentrism. We can identify the following position as distinctive to Marcion's Christology and driving his Christocentrism: a complete separation of the *redemptive* from the *messianic* or, put differently, the total *de-Judaization of soteriology*, the doctrine of salvation. Jesus is not "the Christ" in any Jewish sense (and thus in any historical sense), in spite of the inescapably Jewish meaning of the term *ho christos*; Marcion, in fact, insisted that the Jewish messiah was a political figure, and he was still to come. Thus, we can refer to this point as Marcionist Christocentrism or the thesis of the messianic/redeemer separation. Marcion's position on the canon can be viewed as both a cause and a consequence of this position, depending on what perspective one takes.

The second element of Marcionism is the separation of what is now called the Old and New Testament, with the former being exclusively Jewish and the latter exclusively Christian. The Old Testament generally was a problem in the early church, but it is important to focus specifically on Marcion's anti-Jewish rationale: the Old Testament, while a source of valuable information, is the Testament of the creating and evil God and his people, and thus it has nothing to do with the Redeemer, the Alien God. The separability of the testaments and the separability of Jesus' messianic and redemptive status are mutually implicative, for adopting one should lead a thinker, if consistent, to the other.

A third feature of Marcionism is the separation of salvation from the world, or soteriology from cosmology. This, too, flows from the other positions, although perhaps with less obvious logical force. For if the world is made by the God of the Old Testament, and the Old Testament has nothing distinctive to contribute to Christianity, then Christianity must be intelligible independently of the world the Jewish God created. The radical nature of the redeemer implies that he creates, as it were, his own context of intelligibility.

The fourth, and most ontologically and cosmologically radical, position distinctive to Marcionism is the positing of two Gods: one, the creator portrayed in the Old Testament, the other, the purely good alien God who is manifest in Jesus Christ. One could see this, too, as the ultimate ground or consequent of the other positions, although it will be the position least likely to be adopted by those sympathetic to the other three points, as we will see.

Marcionism, then, which I intend as a heuristic concept, will refer to these four theses of separation: (1) The separation of the messiah from the redeemer; (2) the separation of the Old from the New Testament; (3) the separation of soteriology from cosmology; and finally (4) the separation of the God of redemption, of Jesus Christ, from the God of creation and Israel. Each of these theses characterizes Marcionism with respect to its (1) Christology, (2) bibliology, (3) soteriology, and (4) cosmology/doctrine of God, and they all constitute Marcion's program for the purification of Christianity from its Jewish elements, accomplished through the de-Judaizing of Jesus, the scriptures, salvation, and God. It is in reference to these separations and the program of de-Judaization they constitute, then, that I will use the term "Marcionism" or related adjectives.

Marcion himself was excommunicated from the orthodox church in the second-century. Marcionism, however, was not so easily expelled.

Some 1600 hundred years after its appearance, Marcionism would rise again to dominate, if from the shadows, the imagination of the greatest philosophers and theologians of modern German theology. How did this happen? To answer that question, we need now to turn to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and the book that defined modern liberal theology.

Schleiermacher's Theology in Context

How important is Schleiermacher's major work? Consider one of the greatest living scholars of Schleiermacher: "For sustained systematic power and intellectual penetration, his dogmatic masterpiece *The Christian Faith* (1821-2; 2nd ed., 1830-1) is unsurpassed in Christian theological literature. [...] Perhaps it is only with the much earlier masterpiece of Western theology, the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, that the *Glaubenslehre* can be justly compared." B.A. Gerrish's verdict would hardly engender protest in any careful and sympathetic reader of the *Glaubenslehre* (hereafter: *GL*). Although our concern will be primarily with Schleiermacher's doctrine of Scripture and later with his Christology, we need first to place Schleiermacher and his great work in its historical context.

Schleiermacher is part of not only the history of theology but also the history of philosophy and, more broadly, the cultural history of nineteenth-century Germany. He was one of the young romantics who were part of the philosophical and religious revolution begun by Immanuel Kant. Kant's thought, which in its main effect combined a profound and radical commitment to freedom as rational autonomy with an equally sustained and rigorous commitment to science or *Wissenschaft*, had transformed the intellectual world of Germany by the end of the eighteenth century.

Kant's philosophy only achieved popularity and influence through the pantheism controversy, which centered on the claim by F.H. Jacobi, shortly after Gotthold Lessing's death, that Lessing had been a Spinozist, which at the time meant a pantheist, fatalist, and nihilist, and thus apparently an enemy of the Enlightenment project for which he stood. The ultimate result of the pantheism controversy, quite contrary to Jacobi's intentions, was to legitimate the philosophy of Spinoza, which became a crucial force in shaping the intellectual life of the youth in the 1790's, who were to become the great philosophers, writers, and theologians of their generation. This group included Schelling, Hegel, the Schlegel brothers (Friedrich and August), as well as Schleiermacher.

Although the period from the 1790's to the 1830's was one of huge ferment philosophically and religiously, it is fair to characterize the thought of the period in terms of a tendency towards *holism* reflected in an emphasis on unity, systematicity, and a shift to organic, rather than mechanical, metaphors for nature), pantheism, derived from Spinoza, and the acceptance of and emphasis upon Kantian freedom and the legitimacy of science. The holism and scientific emphases of the period often joined, as in the German Idealists, but even where they did not, the influence of Spinoza, especially upon the German Romantics, like Schleiermacher, led to a general antipathy to dualism and a positive assessment of the world and nature. In early German Romanticism (*Frühromantik*), there was a particular reaction to the extension of freedom in the thought of J.G. Fichte, who so emphasized the radical creative nature of freedom that, in his early philosophy, he claimed that ultimately the entire world is the product of pure spontaneous activity, an activity of which we are somehow the source. Against this emphasis, the early romantics found a crucial counterbalance to radical freedom in *feeling* (*Gefühl*) and its uncovering of our experience of the *givenness* of reality, of the world as a reality standing over against us, and not the result of our activity.

This is the context in which we must consider Schleiermacher, since his absolute feeling of dependence is a distinctively romantic notion and his systematic emphases are characteristic of the period as a whole. Schleiermacher's *GL* was a conscious attempt to wed the modern world of science, freedom, and Enlightenment with the Christian tradition, preserving as much as possible of the latter without sacrificing the former. As a result of this commitment, Schleiermacher abandoned orthodox views of scripture and whole-heartedly embraced historical criticism, even if his own critical opinions can be seen, in retrospect, to have been biased towards his theological commitments (hardly a rare or discrediting phenomenon).

Schleiermacher's historical context provides hints, but nothing conclusive, as to how and why he became particularly interested in Marcion and, more important for our purposes, how and why he developed Marcionist theological positions.

First, Immanuel Kant, easily the most significant philosopher for Schleiermacher's generation, as we have seen, published his influential *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* in 1793, and in it articulated a Marcionist view of the Bible and Jesus, though with no historical reference to Marcion or church history generally. Kant's work should not be underestimated for its influence on specifically philosophical and theological anti-Judaism in the era of German Idealism, and a consideration of this in full would require its own argument. Moreover, there was a strong strain of anti-Judaism in the Enlightenment generally, and in Germany not just Kant but another great luminary of the age, Goethe, expressed a deep prejudice towards the Old Testament, which is then found in the major idealists, like Hegel in his early work. Klaus Beckman is thus right to note that while Schleiermacher rejected Kant's paradigm of religion as morality, he could still incorporate his negative view of Judaism.

Second, Marcion is the most infamous heretic in orthodox heresiology. So Schleiermacher would have encountered him as a student through the major patristic sources, particularly Irenaeus and Tertullian. But the first scholarly source of Schleiermacher's era to develop a historiographically innovative view on Marcion, one that was both more nuanced and positive than the traditional presentation, was the *Genetische Entwicklung der vornehmsten gnostischen Systeme* of August Neander (1789-1850), published in 1818. Neander was Schleiermacher's younger colleague in church history at the University of Berlin, and the first major historian of theology in the liberal theological tradition. In the second edition of the *Genetische Entwicklung* he even called Marcion an "authentic Protestant." While Schleiermacher's later lectures in church history cite Neander, given that Neander was a generation younger than Schleiermacher and influenced by him, Neander's work cannot explain Schleiermacher's view of Marcion, particularly as Schleiermacher expressed his Marcionist view of the Bible, for example, as early as his the first edition (1811) of his *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, a book that scholars agree was revolutionary in the development of modern theology as an academic discipline.

Marcion's presence in Christian consciousness is not new, given his status; what is different about Schleiermacher's context is the Enlightenment and specifically Kantian background of a kind of philosophically motivated anti-Judaism that may have contributed to a positive re-appraisal of the historical Marcion. This is quite important to recognize. For theological anti-Judaism and knowledge of Marcion had co-existed from the beginnings of the orthodox tradition, but this had not led to widespread sympathy for Marcion, or a transmutation of anti-Judaism into a Marcionist vein. Schleiermacher, as we will see, is the catalyst of this change in theology, and the rationalist and Kantian background, in which history proves problematic to an ideal of pure reason or, in Schleiermacher, direct intuition, partly explains how this shift could occur. Moreover, Schleiermacher's appraisal of Marcion cannot be separated from his long-standing prejudice against the OT and his theologically negative view of Judaism in the *Glaubenslehre*, to which we can now turn.

Schleiermacher's Bible and the Role of Judaism

Schleiermacher's general position on Judaism's relationship to Christianity is to concede a "special historical connection" while denying that Judaism is *distinctively* related to Christianity in its existence and aim, viz. it is in the same position in relation to Christianity as is paganism. He makes this argument early, in the introductory material of *GL*, and his argument is explicitly concerned to eliminate Judaism as a basis of, or something that has an essential explanatory connection to, Christianity. Thus, Christianity "cannot be seen as a transformation or renewed continuation of Judaism." Jews and pagans, on Schleiermacher's view, had and have exactly the same relation to Christianity. Moreover, that in the Old Testament which is "most definitely Jewish" has the "least value" for Christians.

This neutralization of any special interpretive significance that Judaism might have for Christianity leads naturally to Schleiermacher's position on the Old Testament, as he himself observes. Claiming that one could not have any proper confidence in a doctrine found in the Old Testament that had no attestation in the New Testament, whereas any doctrine taught in the New needs no support, he concludes that the "Old Testament appears simply a superfluous authority for dogmatics." Taken as an argument, this is manifestly question-begging, for on the traditional orthodox view of the equal and total inspiration of both testaments, a doctrine could naturally be developed based on its presence in the Old Testament, even if it was not attested in the New. To suggest otherwise is already to downgrade the status of the Old Testament.

The significance of Schleiermacher's claim does not rest on its argumentative basis, however firm or shaky it may be, but rather on the extraordinary significance of a major theologian, holding the most prestigious position in theology at the time (Professor of Theology at the newly-founded University of Berlin), claiming that the Old Testament was a "superfluous authority for dogmatics." This claim is reinforced when Schleiermacher considers the doctrine of Scripture and the canon in more detail.

In treating the doctrine of Scripture, all of Schleiermacher's propositions refer only to the New Testament, and thus he clearly does not extend any classical doctrine of Scripture (even in his reformulated versions), such as inspiration and canonicity (130), or sufficiency (131), to the Old Testament. This is the explicit dogmatic ratification not only of his early claims about Judaism, but also his argument for the "superfluous" authority of the Old Testament. He recognizes his divergence from the Christian tradition here in section 132, where he says that his "exposition of this doctrine diverges from custom in this respect, that in the two theorems the New Testament writings alone were treated of Intentionally, however, it is announced as a postscript, because it is merely polemical and therefore will have lost its relevance as soon as the difference between the two Testaments is generally recognized," a state of affairs he rightly noted is still "distant."

Schleiermacher is clearly committed, then, to the Marcionist thesis of the separability of the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, although he could not consistently adopt Marcion's most radical cosmological thesis of two different gods, he comes remarkably close to this position, especially considering his general antipathy to dualism, when he speaks of the Old Testament Law. For he claims that the Law cannot originate "from the same Spirit" that God sends to us through Christ, and he further says that "nowhere and in no way does Christ represent the sending of the Spirit, with whose witness He combines the witness of the disciples, as the *return* of what had already been there and had merely disappeared for a while." Thus, Schleiermacher clearly denies the identity of the source of the Law and the source of the Christian life. Given, then, that the historical and prophetic books depend on the Law, the rest of the Old Testament, too, must originate from "the common Spirit of the nation, thus not the Christian."

This extension of the separation of the Old and New Testaments down to the separation of their sources provides profound testimony to the level at which these Marcionist ideas penetrated Schleiermacher's thought, for his system could hardly provide a coherent defense of claims at this point, given both their exegetical implausibility and their *prima facie* implication that ultimately all things do not have the same source in God, a tenet Schleiermacher's strong conception of the divine decrees and his holism make necessary. His antipathy to the Law and privileging of the prophets is itself not new, of course, but rather represented a long-standing trend in critical interpretation which would receive its most influential form in Julius Wellhausen's theory of the formation of the Pentateuch, now known as the documentary hypothesis.

It should be clear that Schleiermacher's thought can be justly characterized as Marcionist. His separation of the spiritual sources of the two Testaments provides a version of the fourth thesis, the separation of the God of Israel from the God of Jesus Christ, even if this position does not seem to fit well into Schleiermacher's broader commitments or his historical context. Moreover, he frequently emphasizes the newness of the Gospel, something characteristic of Marcion, though not a tenet that by itself could justify labeling a position Marcionist. Combined, however, with some of the distinctive positions of Marcionism, Schleiermacher's emphasis on the newness of the Gospel takes on a deeper significance.

The major question that remains is: given that we observed the first two Marcionist theses entailed each other, does Schleiermacher's Christology stand independently of his position on the Old Testament, or can it be seen as a further instance of Marcionism in his theology? Consideration of this question in conjunction with the primary way in which Schleiermacher's system is apparently opposed to Marcionism will help us achieve a synthetic appraisal of the significance of Schleiermacher's Marcionism.

Schleiermacher's Jesus: Christ, not Messiah

Schleiermacher's theology is profoundly Christocentric, that is, ordered by a profound and singular architectonic focus on the person of Jesus as Schleiermacher sees him. This is a feature that has long been remarked upon, for, as George Hunsinger notes, "thoroughgoing Christocentrism is one of the interesting features that distinguished modern theology from, say, Protestant scholastic theology in the seventeenth century," and Schleiermacher is the origin of this modern Christocentrism. Inseparable from Schleiermacher's Christocentrism is his emphasis on redemption, for "only through Jesus and thus only in Christianity has redemption become the central point of piety [and thus of religion]." Schleiermacher's language of the "central point" (*Mittelpunkt*) should be taken seriously, as section 11, but more clearly the rest of *GL*, demonstrates. For it is to redemption that all elements of Christian theology must be referred. As Christ is the source and center of redemption, the one through which it is "universally and completely accomplished," redemption and Jesus can be conceptually distinguished, but they are not materially separate. Redemption, for Schleiermacher, simply articulates the meaning of the identity of Jesus for Christian theology; it has no separate material content, such as one might find, for example, in the Exodus. As the primordial redemptive event in the Old Testament, one patterned on the creation account itself, the Exodus, as well as many other moments in the life of Israel, were viewed by Christians as crucial parts of redemption that prefigure Jesus' life and death, rather than, as in Schleiermacher, seeing the entirety of God's redemptive activity localized in the person of Jesus, thereby eliminating the history of Israel from the appraisal of Jesus. As we have seen, this is an explicit premise of Schleiermacher's theology.

Thus, neither Jesus nor redemption has anything essential to do with Judaism. Jesus is, for all theological purposes, non-Jewish. As a fact of omission, or an issue of absence, such a position might seem to imply that there is little more one could adduce to establish the unimportance of Jesus' Jewishness to his redeeming status than what we have already seen. It is true that for much of Schleiermacher's Christology, one would simply have to present it and then note the absence of any essentially Jewish or messianic dimension; this would be tedious and of little value, although it is crucially true that Schleiermacher's portrayal of redemption has no dependence on the idea of the messiah. Thus, Schleiermacher does indeed separate the messianic from the redemptive in Jesus.

Schleiermacher is, however, sensitive to the fact that Jesus' development, and particularly his Jewish context, poses a problem for his ideality, and thus in section 93 he explicitly discusses various views, some of which could make "Christianity only a new evolution of Judaism, though one saturated by foreign wisdom from the time, and Jesus only a more or less original and revolutionary reformer of the Jewish law." In a complex discussion whose details we can set aside, Schleiermacher argues that what is essential to Jesus' identity as the redeemer is his pure self-activity, which is in no way impaired by or tainted from the historical peculiarities of his situation. Near the end of his discussion he notes:

Here we can only call attention in passing and by anticipation to the influence which this conception of the ideality of the Redeemer in the perfectly natural historicity of his career exercises on all the Christian doctrines current in the Church, all of which *must be formulated differently if that conception more or less is given up*.

Although Schleiermacher is prudently cautious, this is exactly what he thinks should happen, as his theology clearly indicates.

Schleiermacher thus “epitomize[s] the process whereby the standard model of Christian theology is outfitted for life in the modern world through a process of de-Judaization.” More specifically, we can and should call this the Marcionizing tendency of modern theology.

Of the four theses of separation that I used to characterize Marcionism, Schleiermacher holds to the first, second, and third, but only partially to the fourth. Christology is, as with Marcion, at the center of Schleiermacher’s thought, although we have come to it through his bibliology, for it is there that he most clearly advocates a form of Marcionism. The Christological corollary, as we have now seen, follows closely from, or could be said even to cause, Schleiermacher’s view of the Old Testament. We have not spoken of Schleiermacher’s position on soteriology and cosmology, but this is because the very methodology of the *GL* separates salvation from any statements about the cosmos or even nature, thus re-enacting Marcion’s separation of cosmology and soteriology at a formal, or methodological, level. Schleiermacher rejects the historicity of the Fall, rejects any cosmic consequences of it, and with equal consistency rejects the idea that redemption concerns the cosmos. For as the cosmos has not fallen, so the cosmos is not the object of redemption, for redemption has to do with Christ-consciousness, which the cosmos could only be said to experience insofar as humans are part of it. Schleiermacher is, in his famous description, a pietist of a higher order, and the *GL* is arguably the apex of inwardness in the modern theological tradition. No more radical focus on inwardness could be conceived than Marcion’s, but Schleiermacher’s theology, in a move that becomes characteristic of German liberalism, cordons off theology from nature and science—as well as from metaphysics and history—and finds the distinguishing nature of religion in an inward, non-conceptual state of the person, viz. feeling. Schleiermacher could be said to hold to, or tend towards, the fourth thesis of the separation of the God of Israel from the God of Jesus in virtue of the strict differentiation of the sources of the Old Testament and of Jesus, a point that should not be neglected.

But the positing of two different Gods, for which Marcion is most well-known, entails a radical cosmological and ontological dualism of an extremity that is unusual in the history of philosophy and theology in the modern world. Moreover, it is here critical to recall Schleiermacher's intellectual context, characterized, as I noted, by holism, a respect for science or *Wissenschaft*, Kantian freedom, and pantheism. The entire tendency of the age, evident in his own thought (and explicit in his hermeneutics), was against any ultimate or insuperable dualism and towards an emphasis on the systematic context in which meaning is created, the interdependency of the parts of the whole, and the prioritizing of the whole over the parts, which often leads to a methodological preference for synthetic rather than analytic, or decompositional, modes of reasoning. The systematicity for which the *GL* is praised by Gerrish and many others is an expression of this holism, as well as Schleiermacher's view of theology as a science or *Wissenschaft*. Thus, the most ontologically radical feature of Marcion's thought comes into direct conflict with the tendency of theology and philosophy in the nineteenth century. Yet in spite of that, we have seen how a kind of systematically incoherent impulse towards theological dualism emerges exactly where one would expect it, given our argument: in Schleiermacher's treatment of the God of Israel.

Schleiermacher's intellectual and cultural context is important for understanding why the Marcionism evident in his theology does not extend to theological dualism. It should not obstruct from view the fact that on the most crucial theological question, viz. who is Jesus, the father of modern theology follows in the footsteps of Marcion, and that his commitment is deep enough to lead him to argue for the non-canonical status of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture, a Christocentrism whose only historical parallel is Marcion, and to a noted antipathy towards the God of the Old Testament (and thus an implicit dissociation of Israel's God from the God of Jesus).

The Christianity at the foundation of modern theology is a Christianity without Judaism. In this elimination of Judaism we find the crucially modern function of Schleiermacher's Marcionism: a theological flight from history.

Schleiermacher's later thought, as Beckmann observes, heightens the tensions between Schleiermacher's commitment to history as a biblical scholar and his view of the theological significance of Jesus, which continued to move apart in liberal theology. How history and meaning relate is arguably the foundational problem of nineteenth-century philosophy and theology, but it is critical to see that this problem has a concrete form for Christian theology, viz. Judaism's relationship to Christianity, and that the dominant response to this problem, as we see in Schleiermacher, is a revival of Marcionism for the modern world.

Nachleben: Marcion's Heirs

The neglect of Schleiermacher's Marcionism in scholarship has entailed a blindness to the significance of Marcionism for nineteenth-century theology as a whole. If any century could be said to belong to Marcion, it was the nineteenth. In biblical scholarship, J. C. O'Neill has shown that it was essentially Marcion's theory of the relationship between Paul and Judaism that drove New Testament criticism. He concludes that the "history of nineteenth-century New Testament criticism is the history of how Marcion's theory has not been sustained; but it is also the history of how Marcion's theory was always being modified but never clearly abandoned Marcion the historian has his greatest success in the nineteenth century." But, as this article has argued, it was not just Marcion the historian, but also Marcion the theologian, who had his greatest success in the nineteenth century. For the first time, a pre-eminent, respected theologian of the Christian church had, in the greatest, and founding, work of modern theology, argued for a Christianity *essentially free of Judaism*, thereby advancing Marcionism into the heart of Protestantism: its doctrine of the Bible and its doctrine of Christ. And Schleiermacher had heirs.

Ferdinand Christian Baur, the founder of the Tübingen School, was the most influential advocate of the essentially Marcionist theory of the New Testament and early Christianity to which O'Neill referred. But he was also a theologian who founded the discipline of historical theology and did extensive and deeply influential scholarship on the history of the Christian church, its theology, and Gnosticism. Baur saw in the thought of Schleiermacher and his contemporaries the resurgence of what he called *Christian Gnosis*. Baur recognized in Schleiermacher's thought a religious-philosophical foundation that was in accord with earlier forms of Gnosticism, and he was quick to note not only Schleiermacher's position on Judaism and the Old Testament, but also its antecedent: the "history of the philosophy of religion presents no more noteworthy parallel [to Schleiermacher's position on the Old Testament and his "antipathy to Judaism"] than [...] the antinomianism of Marcion." Baur thus recognized the deeply anti-Jewish character of Schleiermacher's thought and compared it to Marcion's.

It is no accident that it is Adolf von Harnack, author of the history of theology "with which every other scholar in the field [of early Christianity] must contend," who also wrote what has remained the standard scholarly study of Marcion. Harnack was the great representative of liberal theology in Wilhelmine Germany and the founding father of the scholarly tradition in historical theology that produced B.A. Gerrish and Jaroslav Pelikan, among others. Harnack recognized the connection between Baur's Tübingen School and Marcion, judging that, although Baur did not deny that Paul "recognized the Old Testament and the God of the Old Testament," Baur's difference from Marcion is "not so great," for "to [him] Paul too had surrendered 'in idea' the Old Testament God, and in a certain sense he was correct in this assertion." Harnack likewise recognized Schleiermacher's connection to Marcion: "On the historical-critical and religious grounds, then, it follows from

this with inescapable necessity—particularly since the concept of inspiration in its old sense was dissolved—that any sort of equation of the Old Testament with the New Testament and any authority for the Old Testament in Christianity cannot be maintained. Schleiermacher, and others along with him, *clearly recognized this*: Marcion was given his due.”

Harnack’s own position is clear. Recognizing that the question of the Old Testament “still today confronts and challenges Protestant Christianity,” he claims that “this book [the Old Testament] will be everywhere esteemed and treasured in its distinctiveness and its significance (the prophets) only when the *canonical* authority to which it is not entitled is withdrawn from it.”

There is thus a direct line running from Schleiermacher to the two great historical theologians of the liberal tradition, the architects of the historical narrative that defined liberal Protestantism throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century: historical theology’s founder, Baur, and its great representative into the twentieth century, Harnack. What the latter figures share with each other is the recognition of Schleiermacher’s Marcionism; and it is precisely that Marcionism that binds all three, for what they recognize in Schleiermacher they supported, *mutatis mutandis*, in their own theologies.

In 1921, a century ago this year, Harnack published the first edition of his monograph on Marcion, with its stunning subtitle: *Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (The Gospel of the Alien God). He concluded, as we have seen, with a plea for the recognition that Marcion’s time had come. It was time for a Redeemer who was not a messiah, a Christianity free of Judaism. In the evidence detailing Schleiermacher’s Marcionism, I have shown that Harnack’s plea was not a departure from, but a fulfillment of, the wishes of the founder of modern theology.

In 1939, Marcion’s time did come, in a way, for that was the year that the “Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life” was founded. The fact that Schleiermacher was a Marcionist in key aspects of his theology does not itself constitute evidence that Schleiermacher himself was antisemitic. Nevertheless, it would be fatuous to deny any connection between Marcionism and antisemitism, for Marcionism presents Judaism as a decidedly inferior religion and Jews as the adherents of an inferior God.

Christian theologians and scholars of Christianity, by failing either to recognize the reality or the significance of Schleiermacher’s Marcionism, have unwittingly covered over the historically momentous fact that the most academically respectable form of Christian theology in the modern world was rooted in a Christianity excised of its Jewishness.

Moreover, as a *theological* point, Schleiermacher's Marcionism, the revival of one of the most ancient heresies in the most esteemed modern theologian, constitutes a shift in Christian theology that is at least as significant as Schleiermacher's theory of religion or his other reformulations of Christian doctrine.

The significance of Schleiermacher's Marcionism to two of his most famous heirs, Baur and Harnack, suggests that the position was passed onto the liberal tradition and may in fact constitute a distinguishing characteristic of German liberal theology, just as Franz Rosenzweig thought. Marcionism may be Schleiermacher's largely unacknowledged legacy to modern theology. Support for this claim comes from a live controversy in contemporary German theology, centered on an article published in 2013 by Notger Slenczka, chair of systematic theology at the Humboldt University of Berlin – the literal successor to Schleiermacher, who helped found the university and held its first Chair of Systematic Theology.

In “Die Kirche und Das Alte Testament,” Slenczka argues for the elimination of the Old Testament from the canon, explicitly invoking the support of Schleiermacher and Harnack, yet making no serious reference to Marcion or to the fact that Schleiermacher's argument, as I have shown, is about eliminating Judaism from the concept of Christianity. Many of the dimensions of Slenczka's argument would require a separate treatment that can engage the issues in systematic theology he raises as well the post-Holocaust context that makes his argument even more disturbing than Harnack's plea in the early twenties.

What is worth noting here, and what unfortunately illustrates the depth of anti-Judaism still present in modern theology, is that Slenczka's position entirely ignores decades of scholarship on antisemitism and anti-Judaism, as well as historical work on the apostle Paul, the historical Jesus, and Christian origins; his article cites not a single scholarly book on Christianity and anti-Judaism and makes no reference to the Holocaust, the German Christian movement, or the “Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence on German Church Life.” His article is utterly oblivious to its problematic character vis-à-vis the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism (and the same problematic character of Schleiermacher and Harnack's position) and the status of the Old Testament under the Nazis. In the ensuing controversy that his article has provoked in Germany, it was accused of anti-Judaism. That Slenczka could claim to be “astonished” by the accusation because an “essential argument of his position” was to further Christian-Jewish dialogue is a testament to the historically naïve character of so much systematic theology today and the enduring ignorance of the importance of Marcion and anti-Judaism in modern theology.

Most Christian theology proceeds as if Christian anti-Judaism does not exist, as if it were not part of Christian theology, and, even worse, as if the Holocaust should have no influence on the practice of theology, particularly as it pertains to the relationship of Christianity and Judaism. That Slenczka can profess astonishment at the accusation of anti-Judaism today, over 70 years after the Holocaust and after decades of scholarship on

Christianity and anti-Judaism and antisemitism, demonstrates the isolation of academic theology from what might reasonably be construed as relevant areas of historical scholarship. Such isolation from importantly related scholarly domains is not unique to contemporary German theology nor to the topic of anti-Judaism, but is part of a broader problem in modern theology, one which pertains directly to the lacuna that this article has sought to point out and address.

Modern, liberal theology attempts to justify its position in the university by claiming to be a serious academic discipline, one *Wissenschaft* among others. Yet the rise of historical consciousness posed major problems to Christianity's historical self-understanding and, as my argument has shown, Judaism not only represents these problems for Christianity but can be seen as the cutting edge of the problem of history. It is not an accident that it is the two most influential and powerful church historians and scholars of the liberal tradition, Baur and Harnack, who evince an awareness of Schleiermacher's radical position on Scripture and its connection to Marcion.

For it is precisely the attempt to present the development of Christianity as a historical subject that acutely and unavoidably confronts the scholar with the question of Judaism; and it is in this historicist context that Marcionism gains a distinctively modern appeal. Judaism's relationship to Christianity thus becomes a symbol for the crisis that Christian theology faces when it seeks to maintain a distinctively theological and Christian identity by ignoring history and Judaism.

Slenczka's argument, essentially an attempt to reprimarize Schleiermacher, is a timely example of how far systematic theologians are from being able to carry out this task with any historical plausibility. The issues he raises are important for theologians and biblical scholars. But the importance of his subject does not excuse the complete failure of theology as a *discipline*—for it is unfair to put all the weight on Slenczka's single article, given his position in academic theology—to take responsibility for its own role in creating and perpetuating anti-Judaism, which is only one of many prejudices that the modern university has been complicit in spreading and justifying throughout its history. Taking responsibility for this history means, at a minimum, understanding the deep connections between anti-Judaism and the development of Christianity, theology, and philosophy, particularly in the German tradition that has so powerfully shaped liberal Christianity and the research university.

Ultimately the nature of this Marcionist anti-Judaic legacy and its connections to German Idealism and post-Idealist thought, the crisis era of Weimar, and the Third Reich require detailed exploration far beyond the scope of an article. My goal here has been to make clear, for readers across various disciplines, this basic yet neglected truth. If it is true that Schleiermacher is the father of modern theology – and it is – then it is also true that modern Protestant Christianity owes a profound, yet unacknowledged debt to Marcion, and its theologians must reckon with their origins as Marcion's heirs.